

THE LEISURE HOUR

A FAMILY JOURNAL OF INSTRUCTION AND RECREATION.

"BEHOLD IN THESE WHAT LEISURE HOURS DEMAND,—AMUSEMENT AND TRUE KNOWLEDGE HAND IN HAND."—*Cooper.*



"GOD HAS BEEN VERY KIND, VERY GOOD TO US, DEAR BROTHER."

STORY OF THE CROOKED SIXPENCE.

CHAPTER XX.—THE ORPHAN SISTER AND BROTHER AT HOME.

We shall not be long detained at S— (wrote the poor clerk, the next evening, after taking his cue from his crooked friend and re-arranging his papers). My young owner had many long conversations with his sister, it is true; but we will not record them.

He had stories to tell, also, of his later adventures; and he had to listen to Mary's grateful acknowledgments of fresh kindnesses received; but all this may remain unspoken here. One short chapter, however.

"Ah! Mary," said my owner, on the evening of his return, as he looked round him, "this is a different looking place from our old room in friend Underwood's house, when—but I need not say when."

Truly it was different: it was as pleasant a little parlour as need be—that in which the brother and sister had met. Being summer, there was no fire in the bright-barred grate, which held instead a jar of fresh gathered and sweet-scented flowers. A lamp burned brightly on the table; and the curtains being partly drawn back, and the window thrown open, the beams of the moon, nearly at full, fell aslant on a pleasant garden of flowers without, kept in the neatest, trimmest order, the odours of which rose on the night air and perfumed the atmosphere around. Within, all told of comfort and elegance and taste. There were the old ornaments on the mantel-piece which had formerly brought up feelings of melancholy incongruity in that old home; but besides these, there was nothing to remind Willy of past days of adversity. On the contrary, from the soft carpet beneath his feet, to the neat book-case and a few choice engravings against the tastefully papered walls, everything told of altered circumstances. Oh, how altered!

And Mary herself was altered too. There were the same features, truly; and the same purity and simplicity, and moral as well as natural beauty, were as plainly as ever stamped on her countenance. But the care-worn look, the hollow cheek and eye, and the shrunken frame, which told so pathfully of privation and suffering, were nowhere to be seen. The wasted form had expanded into womanly gracefulness; the eye was bright, but not with painful, unnatural brightness; the small white arm was rounded into beauty, and the dimpled cheek glowed with health and contentment.

Mary's dress, too, though as neat now in plenty and prosperity as it was in those old days of struggling and sorrow, was exchanged from the bare, worn, and scanty habiliments of outward mourning, faded and rusty with age, to the proper and becoming costume befitting her station. No wonder, then, that her brother looked on her with affectionate admiration, and that, when his mind reverted to the past, his glad feelings were expressed in words.

"It is different indeed, Willy," said his sister in reply: "God has been very kind, very good to us, dear brother."

"Yet I was very rebellious then, Mary—very unbelieving. Do you remember how I made bitter sport of your humble but earnest trust in God, when you said, again and again, that you were sure he would not forsake us?"

"If I remember it at all, dear Willy," rejoined the sister—her eyes swimming with tears of joy and gratitude—"it is only to bless our heavenly Father that your rebel heart has been subdued, while he has also done great things for us, whereof we are glad. Oh, Willy, I shall never forget that day, when your letter came to me from so far off, to tell me that our dear father's Bible, which you took with you—"

"With no intention of ever opening it," interposed the sailor.

"Had been made the power of God to your salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus. That was among the happiest days I have ever known, my brother;" and as she said this, Mary clasped her brother's hand.

It was a touching sight, my friend. It would have made your heart swell to have seen it: that sister and brother clasping hands—one so white and fair and delicate, the other so rough and weather-beaten—in token of a union of heart with heart in upward, onward aspirations towards a heavenly inheritance and home.

"And you have never repented—never been sorry—never looked back, Willy, with regret at having been brought to say, 'Thou art my God, and I will praise thee; my father's God, and I will exalt thee?'" said the sister, with a look beaming with confidence and trust.

"Never, Mary, never!"

"And yet you must have been tried and tempted, and perhaps persecuted too, my brother?"

"Why yes, at first there were some who laughed at me—and you know, I never liked being laughed at; and others who laid snares for me, and put temptations in my way; but I thank God who kept me from falling. And, after all, my dear sister, I do not know that I have had more than my share of these things. I expect that you know what it is to 'endure as seeing him who is invisible.'"

"We walk by faith, not by sight," said Mary, softly. Their conversation presently turned to lighter themes.

"And our good old friend, Mr. Underwood," said the young sailor; "what of him?"

"Oh, he gets on bravely in his new shop; and he is so altered and improved that if it were not for the sad scar, which he will carry with him to the grave—"

"As a scar of honour," cried Willy, remembering the time perhaps when he had made sport of his old friend and benefactor, because his face was frightfully scorched and disfigured by fire, wherein by an act of brave heroism he had rescued a child from death at the imminent risk of his own life, and disregard of his own property: "as a scar of honour; and I honour him more and more whenever I think of it. I, for one, should be sorry at its disappearance."

"You will not have to sorrow for that, Willy," said his sister; "but, apart from this, Mr. Underwood really is so changed that he is not like the same man—only for his kindness and simplicity and real goodness. And I am so glad, he really is prospering so much, that, if it were not for his extraordinary benevolence and liberality, he would be getting quite rich."

"He rich! Mr. Underwood rich! he will never be rich, in worldly wealth; I'll warrant him against that," remarked the brother.

"He does not wish to be, Willy. 'What would be the use of my saving up a quantity of money?' he said to Mr. Harding, one day, in my hearing; 'you know I have no one to leave it to, who has a right to look up to me for a legacy; and what should I want to be rich for?'"

"Ah! and what did our good friend and helper, Mr. Harding, say to that?" asked Willy.

"Oh, he only shook his head and smiled. 'I understand you,' he said, 'better than I should have understood you ten years ago, Mr. Underwood.' And there the subject ended."

"And Mr. Harding—tell me about him, Mary."

"You must go and see him, brother; he is constantly popping his dear white head in, as he passes by—he is very lame now, though—and asking if there is any fresh news of the young sailor boy. He seems to forget that the boy is a man now. You must go and report yourself, Willy; though it is a chance if he knows you at first;" and Mary's eye glanced with a little pardonable pride at the manly brother by her side.

"Oh, by all means, as in duty bound, I must steer my way to the alderman's house to-morrow; and to Mr. Underwood's also. I have got a little keepsake for them both in the chest which will be here in the morning by the carrier."

"I don't know that you will be able to persuade Mr. Underwood to accept it, if it is at all valuable, Willy," said the sister, smiling. "You will find him as scrupulous as ever."

"Not accept it! I expect he will, though. Not accept it! Why, if I could have brought him the big diamond I saw at — (it was formerly one of the eyes of an ugly idol, Mary), it would not repay him for what he did for the poor orphans, who owe everything to his kindness."

"Ah, Willy, so I have told him many times, in other words; but he persists in saying, in his quiet simple sort of way, that the obligation is on the other side—that he owes all he has to us; for if we and our dear father had never taken lodgings in his house—" Mary stopped here; for the memory of her father, and his disappointments, and his death of a broken heart, for the moment overcame her.

"Don't sorrow, dear sister," said Willy, gently drawing her to him, encircling her with his arm, and tenderly kissing her cheek, "he is safe in port now, you know; and 'the light affliction which was but for a moment'—that's right, smile through your tears, my love; 'tis all right. And as to what Mr. Underwood says," he added, "why, it is only the old true story, 'The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.'"

In communion such as this the re-united sister and brother sat up till warned by the midnight chimes to part for the night; and on the following day I accompanied my young owner on his proposed visit to his old friends and benefactors. What occurred on these visits, and subsequent ones, I shall not rehearse; but let me not pass over in utter silence, one visit which Willy and Mary paid together. It was to the crowded churchyard where their father lay buried.

The iron gates were open (were they ever closed?) and the grave-digger—not the old man who had pitted the little orphans, but his successor—was busy at his vocation. He was whistling a merry tune in a half-dug grave as the visitors passed by—passed by softly, and trod tenderly and lightly, for the ground beneath their feet was sacred ground in their eyes—till they reached the spot where, ten years before, they had stood desolate, with no friend but God. Ah! he had taken care of them. "Leave thy fatherless children; I will preserve them alive," he had said; and here the children were now.

Having received help, they had continued to that day.

Their father's grave was trimly kept and shaped: Mary had taken care of that; and a plain headstone recorded the name and age, and the time of death, of him whose mouldering, decaying body lay below. Nothing more than this. His love and virtues and sufferings needed no memorial to be carved on stone. They were engraven on living hearts and memories.

And so they stood silently, with eyes not tearless, but hearts not joyless nor ungrateful, by that lowly resting-place. The time was come when brother and sister could both be glad—glad for *his* sake, as Mary had said—that God had taken their father to that blessed home, where "they hunger no more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the LAMB which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

And so they stood silently, till at length the silence was broken.

"Why seek we the living among the dead?" whispered Willy, turning to his sister, standing by his side and clinging to his arm. "He is not here."

And then, turning away, they slowly retraced their steps; and the grave-digger was left alone.

Here a tap at the poor clerk's door reminded him of his engagement with his friend and landlord; and at the signal he laid aside his pen.

Then the little barber entered, and the poor clerk stirred and replenished the fire which he had previously lighted, until it presently burst out into a cheerful warmth and blaze: and then, seated on the opposite sides of the hearth, Mr. Keenedge listened while the poor clerk gave utterance to the following history.

CHAPTER XXI.—THE POOR CLERK BEGINS TO NARRATE HIS OWN STORY TO HIS FRIEND, THE BARBER.

"I AM not going to tell you where I was born, and passed most of my boyish years," said the poor clerk, speaking slowly, and, as it seemed, with a strong effort, which, however, became less and less apparent as he proceeded with his story, until it entirely vanished; "neither shall I tell you what name I bore—"

"Stop, John!" said Mr. Keenedge; "tell me one thing: do you at all mind giving me this history? Because if you do, I won't sit here to hear it—I won't. You hadn't ought to be hurt in your mind, John, along of me. I don't want you to. Mind you, John," the little barber went on, waxing warm as he spoke, "if 'twas to give me ever so much pleasure, and you only a little pain, I wouldn't; no, I wouldn't. So, don't think on it."

"I have told you, my good friend," returned the lonely lodger, "that it will do me good to talk to you, so true and leal as you have always been to me. It is now ten years since—ah, let me say, nearly twenty years since—I knew what it was to hold friendly intercourse with any mortal being; and I may seem awkward in setting about it at first,

after so long a time. But the time is come. The truth is," continued the poor clerk, "I have been of late thinking about the histories of other people, in a fanciful sort of way; and I don't see why I should not talk a little about my own. Only, I must tell it in my own way, you see; and if there are parts of it I am unable to bring myself to speak about, you will respect my silence, Mr. Keenedge."

"Respect and reverence, John; yes, respect and reverence, and honour too," said the little barber, rising from his seat, to stretch his hand across so as to grasp his poor lodger's. Having done this, he seated himself again, gravely; and the solitary man went on.

"Why you have never heard my family name, Mr. Keenedge; why I have never used it; and why it has never, for so many years, passed my lips, to be breathed even to myself, is that I disgraced it, my friend. I had no right to it after that, and less right had I to take another. That is why I have been always 'John' to you, an. to all the world, and nothing else. My employers at the wharf know it, Mr. Keenedge; and they know part of my history too; but they are very kind, very forbearing, very merciful. They never speak of it."

"And they grind you down according, John, I am afraid," said the little barber, shaking his head dubiously. "A man of your talents, Mr. John, to be—"

"Hush! my dear friend. There are younger men than I, of greater abilities for business than I ever had, even in my prime—men with more energy and more talent, and of untainted reputation, who are not better off than I am, I fear. Yes, I have no reason to complain of being ground down, believe me. I earn what I receive; I am thankful for this mercy; and more than this I have no right to expect."

"I know, Mr. John, that in your humbleness you say so, and in your humbleness you think so, and I won't contradict you further; but thoughts is thoughts, John; and yours and mine differs."

"We will not dispute about this, my friend," resumed the poor clerk; "I will begin my history."

"Though I do not divulge my name, nor my family, nor my birthplace, I may say of my father that he was a highly respected professional man; and of my home, that it was a happy one. There were several of us—brothers and sisters; but there seemed to be a fatality against us. I do not mean a blind fatality either; but so it came to pass in the course of God's providence, that, after growing up to maturity, one after another was stricken and died, until only two of us were left. Only one now, I am sure, and that one the blot and the disgrace of the rest."

"Don't, John, don't now," interposed the little barber beseechingly; but, taking no heed of this, the poor clerk went on.

"I said we were a happy family, and I will not recall it; but there was one thing wanting to make our family happiness complete; that one was a mother. She died when we were all young, some of us too young to understand our loss; but it was a loss notwithstanding."

"Surely, John, surely," said Mr. Keenedge, in a tone of sympathy.

"The death of our mother," continued the speaker, "left us all too little under proper and right control, for our father was deeply immersed in business, and we sometimes saw little of him, or he of us, for days together. It is true, we had servants to look after us, and governesses to teach us and whip us, and as we grew old enough we were sent to good schools, away from home; but nothing can compensate for the loss of a mother's—a good mother's care and love."

"Nothink, John, nothink!" said the little barber.

"I went to school when I was ten or eleven years old," the poor clerk resumed, "and I had no reason to complain of the treatment I received; neither, I think, had my teachers to complain of want of application and progress on my part. In short, I received a good education."

"I knowed it, John; I have always knowed that from the first of our acquaintance. Bless you, John, I haven't been these forty years more or less, day after day, taking all sorts and degrees by the nose—in the way of business, mind ye—but I can give a guess what's inside the head. I always said to myself, John, that you was a gentleman born and bred and educated; and nothink could have made me believe to the contrary. No, no."

"Well, I received a good education, if I had but known or cared to know how to use it. The more shame to me that I did not."

"Ah, 'tis how to use it, that's where it is," said Mr. Keenedge sententiously; "that's what I always say when people talk to me about education, and educating the poor, and all that. Do you teach them how to use it when got? That's what I want to be told. Bless you, John, education is a good thing, so is a razor."

"I understand you," returned the clerk; "you think that learning or school education, or increased and cultivated knowledge—call it what we please—has need to be accompanied and sanctified by right principles, to prevent its being a curse. You think that 'knowledge is power,' and that, if it is not a power in the right direction, it is a power in the wrong."

"Them's my thoughts, John," said the barber, nodding approval.

"Possibly you are right, my friend; I will not deny that I believe you are right. I have reason to know this. Well," continued the solitary man, "I received education, whether for good or for evil, and I returned home. I was the youngest of my father's sons; and by this time the family was nearly dispersed, and my poor father was failing in health. This was a great trouble to me then; but I have since had reason to be glad that he did not live long enough to have his heart broken by my profligacy. It is a dreadful thing to reflect upon, my friend, but I won't trouble you with this. I said that almost all the family were dispersed in the world. There was one brother at home, however, a loving, kind, gentle, but high-spirited youth he was; and whatever has been wrong in me, be sure it was not learnt of him. But he did not remain at home long. I need not tell you why; but when

he was about twenty years old, he suddenly resolved to leave home—not home only, but England too. Perhaps he was wrong and hasty, but it is not for me to condemn. However this might be, nothing could stop him, and he went. He never returned; it is long since, and I am persuaded he is dead—my poor brother.

"My brother's going away was, I am afraid, a heavy blow to our father. He did not hold up his head after that, but drooped and drooped, till at last he became but the shadow of his former self.

"Until then, I had remained at home, helping him—I can scarcely say that, though, but having employment—in his office; and even in those early days I had begun, though secretly, the courses through which I afterwards—*fell*. In our town, down an obscure alley, there was a billiard-room, with its usual concomitant, a wine and spirit, otherwise called a refreshment, room. Unhappily, I had long evenings at my command, and I had companions, as unoccupied as myself, who introduced me to this scene of dissipation. I soon learned to play and to drink, and to love the excitement of both vices; while my father's rapidly increasing infirmities gave me the power to indulge in them, not only without control, but without his even suspecting that I was going astray.

"It was my frequent practice," continued the speaker, "to wait till my father retired to his chamber—which he did very early in the evening—and then to steal out, with a latch-key in my pocket, and not return till long after midnight, when I softly and silently let myself in, and crept, like a thief and a villain, to my own room. I could not have done this, so easily at least, without collusion on the part of my father's housekeeper; but she was so far an unprincipled woman, and she did not trouble herself about the matter.

"One night, I was as usual at the billiard-table, stripped of my coat, heated with play, and flushed with wine, when a knocking at the outer door, and a slight disturbance in the room below, caused the players to pause in their game. In another moment the door of the billiard-room was opened, and some one—to this day I know not who—broke in, and called me by my name. I stared wildly at the messenger, and heard him say, 'You must make haste home; your father is dying.'

"I heard no more. Without waiting or thinking to put on my coat, I rushed through the streets, and just as the church clocks were striking two, I reached the door of our house. It was unfastened; I entered, and then stopped tremblingly to listen. In a moment or two the housekeeper was with me, pale with affright and sorrow. By her, my worst fears were confirmed. She had been suddenly aroused by the hard and unnatural breathing of my father, her room being next to his; and on going to his chamber, she had found him in a fit, extended on the floor. Her first impulse was to seek me in my room, with but slender expectation, however, of finding me there. Her next was to obtain a messenger to a surgeon, and then to seek me where, she well guessed, I was to be found. Happily a messenger was at hand, in a man who was passing down the street; and the surgeon and

assistant had already arrived, and were then endeavouring to restore my poor father to consciousness.

"All this, the woman told me in a hurried agitated manner, and I did not wait to hear more. In another moment I was in my father's room. But I will not speak of this: only let me say that all the doctor's skill was futile. In the course of a few hours my dear father was dead."

Arrived thus far in his history, the poor clerk rose and paced his chamber—his bosom heaving with emotion. At length he turned to his guest, and said in a low broken voice: "I cannot tell you more now; come again to-morrow night." Whereupon Mr. Keenedge respectfully withdrew.

SUMMER-TIME IN MOELFRA BAY.

To me, sitting on a limestone crag which projects from the cliff and overhangs the water beneath, the bay looks the very image and presentment of all that is peaceful. The morning is one of the brightest in early July, and the freshness of the late spring has hardly given way to the fervid heat of summer. The lark is singing up on high, quite out of sight, and a pair of thrushes in the long grass by the hedgerow are making pleasant music. There is plenty of herbage growing quite up to the edge of the cliff, and the sheep—all white from their recent shearing—are browsing in small companies, some of them, as it seems, in dangerous proximity to the verge. A fragrant perfume comes to me on the gentle wind that blows from in-shore, and I can see that the hedgerow where the thrushes are singing is yellow with the blossoms of the wild honeysuckle. The green slopes which encircle the bay are dotted here and there with farmsteads, cottages, and a few dwellings of the better sort; cornfields are waving with the green promise of harvest, and the tall church spire rises white and tapering from the surrounding trees. Yonder, to the left, is the little low island with its lighthouse, which has beamed forth its friendly warning to many a storm-driven vessel, though to some, alas! it has been unavailing. From the same quarter comes the feeble click of the quarryman's pick and hammer; and I can see them—looking like bees in the distance—on a far-off ledge, chiselling out blocks of limestone from the solid cliff. On the right, the bay is bounded by another island, between which and the mainland runs a strong eddy; from it Red Wharf Bay sweeps round to a more distant point; and further off still rises the Great Orme's Head, lifting its huge crest right up from the sea. Altogether the prospect on this clear summer morning is one to gladden the eye; and as the waves roll in with a soft ripple, amongst the pointed projections of this vast limestone rock, their murmur is most musical and dreamy.

Yet this is the place that witnessed, some eight months back, that harrowing scene of shipwreck, which has become a matter of melancholy history to the world. On this very crag where I am sitting, the gallant vessel, the "Royal Charter," struck with all the force which the wild storm could give

her; here she heaved, and tossed, and laboured, and finally sunk down amongst the mud and sand and seaweed where she now ignominiously lies. As I look round on the sunlit and rejoicing landscape, I can hardly realize that on these very objects which now appear so cheery, five hundred people turned their last look of life: that here, where birds are singing close by, and cattle feeding, and men working as elsewhere, five hundred people went down "to the death of them that are slain in the midst of the seas." Yet so it is that death and life go hand in hand together, and death preys upon life, and life springs out of death, and the two great mysteries divide the world between them.

Thus I thought and wrote, as I sat upon the rock close underneath which the wreck of the "Royal Charter" is lying, just in the spot where she went down. A small part only of the vessel has been removed; the remainder, in three portions, having settled down gradually, till it has become firmly imbedded in the mud and sand, and the hold and cabins weighted with the same material. The engine-room is to be seen rising several feet above the water, and a couple of buoys, floating one at each end, indicate the great length of the vessel. When the water is very still and clear, more of the wreck may be seen, but otherwise the upper deck and framework having been broken up, the remainder is too far beneath the surface to be discernible. The hold remains in much the same condition as when she struck, the passengers' trunks and luggage having as yet been left undisturbed; so that many sadly interesting revelations may yet be brought to light respecting the ill-fated ship and her freight of human beings. Some time since, when the tides were unusually low, and much of the wreck was exposed to view, there was seen in her side, just below water-mark, the fatal rent through which the sea had poured into the cabins. One of the iron plates had been thrust in by the ship's violent driving against the pointed crag, and from that time till she went down, the passengers were probably neck-deep in water. Faint, despairing, drenched with the icy waves, the poor victims were perhaps hardly conscious of the bitterness of the last struggle; it might have been, as a boatman said to me, that "they didn't know their death when it came."

The hull and stern have been raised and towed round the point at a few hundred yards distance from the wreck, where they have been dragged on shore to be broken up. I saw the village boys playing round them, and swimming their tiny boats in the pools close by, growing up to love the treacherous sea, in spite of wrecks and storms. Here, fixed in this broken framework, had been the wheel, and here the helmsman died at his post; underneath were the remains of the powerful screw, all bent, jagged, and broken. Looking with curious eye at the shattered boarding outside, I made out what had once been modelled and painted upon it as an allegorical device—Neptune in his chariot, trident in hand, gliding with light wheels over the smooth waves, and the Winds going forth from his presence to discharge his auspicious bid-

ding. How sad a commentary does the sequel furnish upon this mythological text!

The shore is still strewn with the relics of the lost ship; bonnets and boots, portions of female garments, stockings, woollen comforters, spars, pieces of canvas and cording, and rivets that have been broken from the iron plates. A sailor's long boot, cut clean off half way down, as if by some sharp heavy blow (as a coast-guardsmen said, "perhaps the poor fellow's leg might have been in it at the time"); an officer's cap, with the gold lace upon it, all muddy and black as the cloth itself; a rotten shred of a linen garment that had once been embroidered; a tiny shoe that would fit an infant's foot of a year old; these were amongst the things that I saw lying on the shore, and which the next tide would wash back again into the sea. Little gold is met with now, though it is probable that, for many years to come, it will be found, more or less, upon the beach after a heavy storm. For months past, also, the sea has ceased to give up those most melancholy burdens, of which so many were borne ashore in the first few weeks after the wreck. Nearly two-thirds of those who went down in the "Royal Charter," within thirty yards of land, will, nevertheless, sleep beneath the waters till the sea shall give up its dead.

I met and conversed with several who were present at the wreck, who were there shortly after the ship struck, who saw her part in pieces and go down. Some of the melancholy incidents of that fatal morning were related to me by veracious eye-witnesses, amongst which was the following affecting occurrence. A saloon-passenger had brought with him his son, a child of three years of age, the only relation he had on board. After the vessel had struck, the father stood on the deck, with his child clasped in his arms. When the ship, with a horrid crash, broke in two, he was swept off by a mighty wave, and washed up as far as the rock, with his boy still in his arms; but the reflux of the wave took him back again, and also swept the child from his grasp. Another inflowing swell took him again to the rock, and brought the infant once more within his reach. With one hand he clutched the child's arm, and with the other seized the cliff, but the force of the retiring water again overcame his strength, he was swept back, and they were again separated. The next wave carried the father to a firm foothold on the rock, but the child had sunk beneath the waters. For four days and nights, with scarcely any rest, the heart-broken parent wandered along the cliffs and shore, seeking the body of his child. On the fifth day he found it; found it himself, by the little island eastward, whither the eddying current had drawn it. My informant said he should never forget the cry of love and anguish which the father uttered as he took up the little dripping corpse, and pressed it to his bosom in an unavailing embrace. The father's love had been as strong as human love could be, but it had had no power to deliver in that murderous storm; and now that the cruel wave had given up the body, the most that he could do was to seek a sacred spot of earth, and bury his dead baby out of sight.

The man who told me this was bronzed and weather-beaten with many years of sun and storm, but his eye glistened and his voice faltered as he spoke; and I was glad to find that his heart could understand me when I talked with him of One whose love to his people is more than a father's love, from whose arms no waves of earthly trouble can sweep his children; whose strong embrace not even the storm of death can be strong enough to overcome.

One side of the churchyard at Llanallgo, about a mile away, is filled with the graves of those whom the waves have given up from the wreck. There they lie, four together in their narrow bed, for the most part nameless and unrecognised. The care of some pious ladies has planted the hillocks with flowers, and they blossom in rich profusion over the unknown dead. As I passed away from that sad churchyard, I paused for a moment at the door of the village school, where the children were singing in English a favourite hymn in those parts, concerning the resurrection from the dead and the reward of the just. It was pleasant to turn to such reflections from the affecting memorials of death which I had just been contemplating; pleasant to leave the wreck, and meditate upon the land "where there shall be no more sea."

ROBERT STEPHENSON.

PART II.

For nearly thirty subsequent years, or to the time of his lamented decease, the life of Robert Stephenson was one of astonishing activity for a man never of robust constitution. His name was perpetually before the public, in connection with some important undertaking; and his career as an engineer was an uninterrupted success. The objects specially contemplated in his constructions—simplicity, permanence, and utility—contributed to this result, together with the care with which he elaborated his plans, and attended to the minutest details, before attempting to carry them into effect. Unlike Brunel, his great contemporary, whose genius was more splendid in designing than cautious in executing, Stephenson, while equally bold in conception, was eminently practical. He thought over the whole problem to be solved, in all its bearings, before committing himself to the actual solution, and enhanced his own reputation by consulting it in connection with the commercial interests of those who intrusted him with their confidence. Brunel, on the other hand, aiming at brilliancy in the line of inventive art, was apt to leave many difficulties unheeded, to hamper him in execution, and produced the most glorious growths of a scientific intellect, to disappoint expectation in their economic results. The career of the two has some striking coincidences. They were both the sons of eminent fathers, who opened up to them the path to distinction. Both were engaged in the same description of gigantic works, which will remain, for centuries to come, monuments of their skill and of the enterprise of their era. They were also nearly the same in age, and both died prematurely, within a

month of each other. Though often in antagonism, warmly advocating their respective views, as in the celebrated "battle of the gauges," they were firm and fast friends to the last. Brunel was on the Menai, to aid Stephenson in floating and fixing the enormous tubes of the Britannia bridge; and Stephenson was on the Thames, to assist Brunel in the launch of the "Great Eastern."

Appointed to execute the London and Birmingham railway, the first sod for which was cut at Chalk Farm on the 1st of June, 1834, Mr. Stephenson fixed his residence in the metropolis, and is said to have walked over the ground of the projected line twenty times before he was satisfied with his survey. Often did the scene in his offices, Great George Street, Westminster, resemble the levee of a minister of state. He superintended altogether the construction of no less than 1850 miles of railway, at an outlay of about £70,000,000 sterling; served as an engineer in Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, Egypt, Canada, and Norway; received the ribbon and cross of the order of Leopold from the king of the Belgians, and the grand cross of the order of St. Olaf from the king of Norway and Sweden; declined the offer of knighthood at home; became M.P. for Whitby in 1847; and succeeded to his father's fortune upon his decease in 1848. The latter died at Tapton House, near Chesterfield, Derbyshire, beautifully situated on a woodland hill, which had been his residence about ten years—a striking contrast to his homely cottage at Killingworth. Immense demands were made upon the time of both father and son, by all kinds of contrivers and projectors, anxious for an opinion in favour of their schemes as a passport to success. They were often as crude as the following lines are doggrel, in which a disappointed candidate for patronage vented his displeasure in one of the railway papers.

"I saw your son Robert, oh fie! oh fie!
He looked upon me with disdain:
His father could see, with half an eye,
Far more than I could explain.

"He wouldn't allow me to leave him my models,
Or a drawing, nor yet read my rhyme;
For many came to him with crack'd noddles,
Which occupied half of his time."

To real merit neither father nor son were inattentive, and considerably respected the feelings of the deserving, however humble their station.

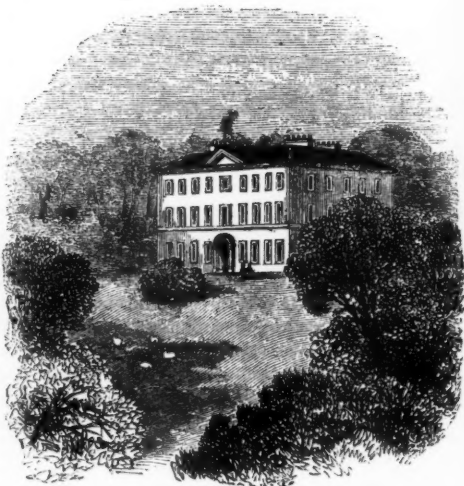
Elected President of the Institution of Civil Engineers for the year 1856, Mr. R. Stephenson laid before that body an interesting *résumé* of British railways, on taking the chair. They exceeded in length, he stated, the ten chief rivers of Europe united; and more than enough of single rails had been laid down to make an iron girdle round the globe. The cost of these lines had been £286,000,000, equal to one-third the amount of the national debt. Hills and mountains had been penetrated with tunnels to the extent of nearly 70 miles. The earth-works measured 550,000,000 of cubic yards. In comparison with the pyramid which these works would rear, St. Paul's would be but as a pigmy to a giant, for the pyramid would rise a mile and a half high, from a base larger than St. James's Park. At least 25,000 bridges had

been built. Not less than 80,000,000 of miles were annually traversed, to run which, two and a half miles of railway must be covered with trains during every second of time, throughout the entire year. The engines, placed in a line, would stretch from London to Chatham, and the vehicles from London to Aberdeen. In every minute of time, four tons of coal were consumed, and twenty tons of water were flashed into steam of high elasticity. As to the wear and tear, 20,000 tons of iron required to be annually replaced; and out of 26,000,000 of sleepers on the railways, 2,000,000 annually perished. To provide the new sleepers, 300,000 trees must every year be felled, or about 5000 acres of forest be cleared of timber.

The works with which the great engineer is more immediately identified in the public mind are the Royal Border Bridge over the Tweed; the High Level Bridge, Newcastle, across the Tyne; the Britannia Tubular Bridge, over the Menai Strait; and the Victoria Bridge, upon the same principle, across the St. Lawrence at Montreal. The idea of a tubular bridge was a perfectly original conception. No model for it existed. It was utterly incomprehensible to multitudes, and originated ominous headshakings, that iron tubes, which, set upright, would rise far above the top of the cross of St. Paul's, could be thrown across a tidal channel, without support from end to end, and at the height of a hundred feet above the water. "You have no doubt," Mr. Stephenson was asked in a parliamentary committee, "that the principle applied to this great span will give ample security to the public?" "Oh, I am quite sure of it," was his reply; and the result fully justified his confidence. But it was a marvel of engineering skill, to construct four iron tubes of the length stated, each heavy as thirty thousand men, float them to their respective places, and then raise them by hydraulic pressure to their elevated permanent position. The Montreal bridge is an enlarged edition of the Britannia, seven times and a half longer than Waterloo Bridge, and not much less than two miles. At the end of the summer of 1852, Mr. Stephenson went to Canada at the request of the Directors of the Grand Trunk Railway Company, and made his report in the following year, on the description of bridge best calculated to prove efficient, the proper site, and the desirableness of such a structure. As the river brings down an enormous quantity of ice on the breaking up of the winter, the problem to be solved was to erect a permanent bridge that would resist an amount of pressure which seemed incalculable, of ice four or five feet thick, in a running stream of a certain inclination, velocity, and breadth. The engineer mastered these elements of the case, and proposed the Victoria Tubular Bridge, opened about the time of his death, all the plans for which issued from his offices at Westminster. The span between the central piers is 330 feet wide; and the other spans, twenty-four of them, 242 feet. The faces of the piers looking towards the current terminate in a sharp-pointed edge, while the sides present to the avalanches of ice only smooth, bevelled-off surfaces. The stone used in the piers is a dense blue limestone, scarcely a block of which is less than seven

tons weight, and many of those exposed to the full force of the breaking-up ice weigh ten tons.

The force employed on the river and its banks, during the last season of the construction of the bridge, amounted to a small army. It consisted of six steamers and seventy-two barges, besides small craft. They were manned by 500 men, which, with 450 labourers in the two stone quarries, and 2090 other artificers of all kinds, makes a total of 3040 workmen. This remarkable structure was formally completed by the Prince of Wales, August the 26th, 1860. He laid the last stone on the Montreal side, proceeded to the centre arch, where two rivets were fastened, and then across to St. Lambert's. In commemoration of the event, a gold medal has been struck, on which a train is represented just emerging from the bridge, with a steamer ascending and a raft coming down the river in the fore-ground. Above are the arms of the Canadian provinces; the names of Stephenson and Ross, the engineers; and the inscription: "The Victoria Bridge of Montreal. The greatest work of engineering skill in the world. Publicly inaugurated and opened in 1860. Grand Trunk Railway of Canada." On the reverse are three circular medallions, exhibiting the busts of the Queen, Prince Albert, and the Prince of Wales, with the royal arms and legend of England in high relief.



TAPTON HOUSE, THE SEAT OF ROBERT STEPHENSON, M.P.

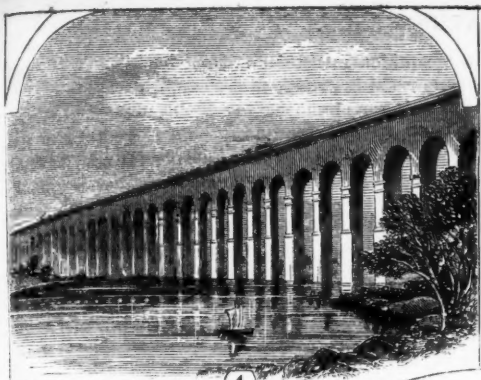
Fond of the sea, Mr. Stephenson kept for many years a steam yacht, the "Titania," in which he was accustomed to spend a portion of each season. In 1856, he placed this vessel at the disposal of Professor Piazzi Smyth, to convey him, with large astronomical instruments, to Teneriffe, for observation at great heights on the elevated peak; and the crew rendered most effective assistance to the astronomer during the whole of his residence on the mountain. From this yacht, after a voyage to Norway, its owner was carried to his house in Gloucester Square to die, on the 12th of October, 1859, having nearly completed the fifty-sixth year of his age. Robert Stephenson, thus cut off

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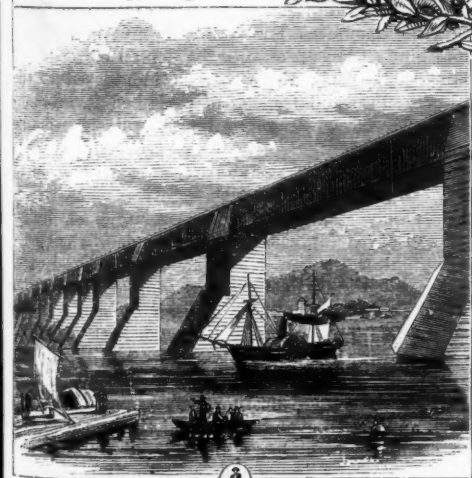
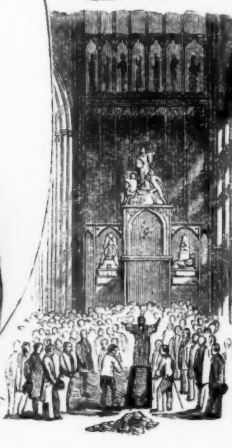
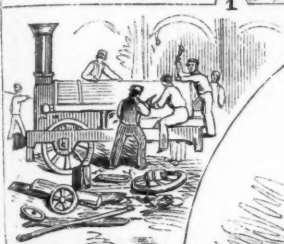
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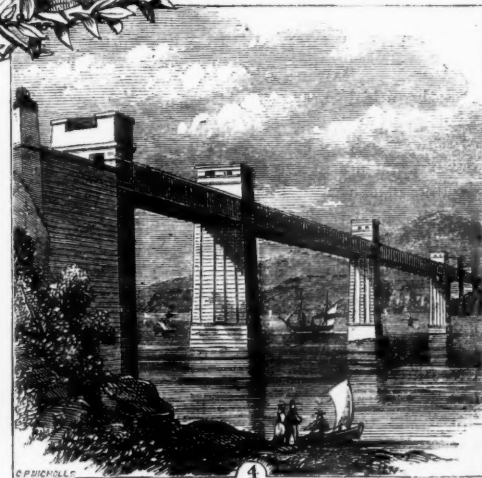
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1. The Royal Border Bridge over the Tweed.

3. The Victoria Bridge across the St. Lawrence at Montreal. 

2. The High Level Bridge at Newcastle-on-Tyne.

4. The Britannia Tubular Bridge across the Menai Straits.

"— in the prime of honourable days,
In the full noon of reputation's blaze,"

was eminently

"Rich in esteem of all his fellow men,
With love and reverence known in life's familiar ways."

Accustomed to superintend great works, and have thousands of workmen at his command, it is remarkable how modest and unassuming was his demeanour, while fully conscious of the strength of his position, and by no means lacking in energy when occasion called for its display. His expenditure was princely—not upon himself, but on his friends—for no man ever delighted more in making others happy. In society he was fascinating in the highest degree, blending frankness with refined courtesy in his manner, laying open his stock of knowledge without a trace of pretension, conferring favours as if receiving them, and gracefully blending sprightly chit-chat with philosophical exposition. High-minded and warm-hearted, few men have been attended to the grave by a larger company of sincere mourners. Upwards of three thousand persons were admitted by tickets into the nave of Westminster Abbey at the funeral, while the ships in the Thames and at the northern ports lowered their flags in token of respect for the deceased. The gathering—quite a spontaneous one—included men of rank, officers of the army and navy, learned professors, artists, and men of letters; directors of great companies, architects and engineers, contractors and operatives, who had assisted in carrying out the designs of the dead, with ladies habited in the deepest mourning. It was not merely as an act of homage to his genius, that the promiscuous multitude collected round the grave, but as an expression of personal attachment; and few more impressive scenes were ever witnessed, than when the choir took up the exquisite anthem,

"His body is buried in peace,
But his soul liveth evermore,"

after the sad words had been said, "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," and a handful of soil had rattled on the coffin.

THE WOODCUTTER'S STORY.

(FROM THE GERMAN.)

ONE beautiful afternoon in spring I was sitting with my old friend the woodcutter on the skirt of the wood which crowns the hill that looks down upon my native village. The sun began to decline in the west, and the still warm rays made golden chequered lights in the inviting shade of the forest. Clear and far-sounding was to be heard the song of the sprightly blackbird, whom I watched, and whose intelligent gold-bordered eyes I could see; the woodpecker hammered busily away at one of the hollow invalids of the wood, and a finch called his absent wife. No other sound but those interrupted the reigning agreeable quietness; not the slightest breathing of wind was there to move the tops of the green firs. It was one of those moments in which creation seems to keep sabbath, and to which the lively singers of the air give the sacred music. All at once, unexpected,

there glided into this peaceful harmony a tumultuous rushing sound, as if the spirit of destruction was flying over the crowns of the mighty firs with gigantic wings; the tops of the trees bent down and came in contact with each other, like human beings going to mutual attack.

I was terror-struck, and, expecting and fearing the downfall of those high trees, I ran wildly into the open field. I ran till I was about a hundred paces away from the edge of the forest, and then I took courage to look back for my old friend. He also had gone away a little from the wood, and was now standing there, quietly watching the strange disturbance of the elements. I felt ashamed of my hasty fright when I saw his calm composure, and approached the wood again. Wonderful enough, the hurricane blew thus furiously over only a small piece of the wood, of scarcely one hundred fathoms. The crowns of the fir-trees bent like feeble reeds in a whirlwind, but further off no branch moved, no leaf trembled. Staring in wonder, I looked on the strange mysterious phenomenon. It lasted about ten minutes; and then, as quickly as it had come, the movement subsided; the trees stood again straight, like soldiers under a rigid command; no leaf whispered, no branch moved.

"What was that?" I asked, awaking from my surprise.

My friend, who looked earnest and gloomy, but not frightened, answered: "I knew both of them, though they have now been buried these thirty years. They possessed, each of them, some land hereabouts; they were rich men, and respected, and yet they let themselves be tempted by the Evil One to move the marking-stone further into the wood; and it is exactly that piece upon which you saw the storm blow that they appropriated by their crime. But it brought them into a legal dispute with their neighbours; and it came to pass that they had to prove their *bonâ fide* (or whatever the lawyers call it) possession by a solemn oath. The parson, who instructed them about what a thing an oath is, spoke words piercing to the soul; how the perjurer cuts himself off from his God and Lord; how he renounces for ever a happy immortality, and binds himself over to the demon of darkness. On hearing this, the two men shuddered to the inmost fibre and marrow of their bodies, and mutually vowed, when going home, to desist from so infamous a deed.

"During the time of the process, their wives had lived in furious enmity with the wives of their husbands' adversaries. Now, the thought of giving in, and of leaving victory in the hands of their enemies, put these women in a state of fire and rage. They called their husbands cowards and fools, who were going to ruin their families on account of a silly fear. Thus upbraided, the good resolutions of the men were at length destroyed. The day for the sitting of the court had come. From far and near the people were collecting. The room was full; head appeared beyond head, and the two men had to stand forth. Doors and windows were then opened, and the judge read with impressive voice the warning against perjury. In thick drops stood

the perspiration on the forehead of the two. But when the judge asked, for the last time, if they really were going to take the oath, they obdurately answered 'Yes.' Their hands rose, and, pale as death, they repeated the fearful form. The process was won. The multitude quitted the room, convinced that perjury had been committed."

This account made me shudder. My old friend looked earnestly in my face, and proceeded with the rest of the tale: "In the same year, God called from the earth those two men, in the fulness of their strength; and I have observed the dreadful inexplicable hurricane on the small narrow piece of wood every year since, about the time of the perjury."

My old friend was evidently superstitious, like many of the poor people on the edge of the Black Forest, and elsewhere. The noise doubtless arose from an eddy of wind passing over the trees from a ravine in the mountains. At the same time I was not displeased to mark the horror in which "bearing false witness" was held, nor was I unmindful of the solemn imprecation in the old Mosaic law, "Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark!"

THE BLACK COUNTRY.

CHAPTER VII.—MUSIC IN THE BLACK COUNTRY.

Red, yellow, and blue; blue, yellow, and green! All colours, all types, all sizes—a true chromatic scale. All announcing events of unparalleled interest; all bespeaking your earnest and prompt attention; placards everywhere. Walls, gates, doors, houses, public windows and private windows alike adorned; we met a new programme on a fresh subject, and in a fresh dress, wherever we turned our eyes. Taking the brevity of life into consideration, it was amazing and mysterious how time could be found to do all that was to be done, if the said placards, which everybody spelt, and on which everybody commented, were to be depended upon. How speakers were to be hunted up to say all that was to be said; audiences to hear all that was to be heard; ignorance to be enlightened by all the information to be poured forth; tea to be infused for all that was to be disposed of! But there was one item of attraction which, whatever might be the entertainment in prospect, or however great the number of other baits, was sure to have its place reserved. *Music* was a necessary addition to every local festivity; the aid of music, instrumental or vocal, must imperatively be invoked, or the arrangements for the public weal be unanimously pronounced imperfect.

On what account that tract of land, with more veracity than politeness denominated the Black Country, has been so eminently patronized by the muse of melody, has never been very satisfactorily ascertained; but it is a fact, and one which I believe to be now generally recognised, that, in respect to the rank which music holds there, and the love of music apparent even among the humblest classes, there is no other part of England which can in the least compete with it. Perhaps

that law of equality by which the world seems to be regulated, has in this district supplied the enjoyment of sound to make amends for the lack of visual gratification. Or is it that sound of some sort becomes a necessary of life to those whose days are passed in an atmosphere of noise? He who toils from morning till night in the mine, the forge, the nail-shop, finds the comparative stillness of his own house distasteful and oppressive. So he resorts for comfort to sound of his own production; and his ideas being happily not restricted to that with which he is most familiar, the result of his endeavours may be as agreeable to others as it is to himself. However, with all the explanations that can be suggested, the universality of musical taste must continue a marvel. Those are the exceptional cases in which, in some form or shape, the love of harmony is not developed; while the real perfection to which the science is frequently carried, by mere working men, may well create the utmost surprise and admiration.

Musical instruments of value may often be discovered in cottages where the real comforts of life are not over-abundant; and there are few of the more respectable habitations which cannot show their harmonium or pianoforte. There is something almost touching in the idea of a hard rough man, returning tired out from his labours by the furnace or beneath the ground, to find his rest and solace in what has proved the soul's refreshment to the great and the gifted in every age of the world.

Let it not be supposed, however, that our melodious countrymen rest satisfied with the productions of those who have gone before them, or content themselves with imitating the strains of others. Those who have made any progress in the art compose for themselves, and, it may be observed, are the *only* inferior composers with whom they would at all put up! Nothing in the whole affair is more striking than the craving that is apparent for the truly great and excellent. The grandest creations of Handel, Mozart, and Mendelssohn are well known and admired.

All this, it may be thought, *must* have some effect, some influence for good. The intense enjoyment of what is in itself so purifying and ennobling must tend to elevate and make better those who can share in it. And I think that it is so. I believe that the inhabitants of this strange country, black in so many senses, morally and physically, are yet *less* black, less depraved, more alive to good impressions, than might have proved the case had not this love of music been so widely diffused. Still, there is much to mar its influence, very much to counteract the good. A force far higher and an influence more powerful are needed here. There is only one sound which can really avail for good; it is of that voice which, when the wilderness hears, it "rejoices and blossoms as the rose;" of His voice who says to them that are in the pit, "Come forth;" to them which are in darkness, "Show yourselves;" of that "still small voice," which can reach the heart amid all the furnace roar or din of life!

In such a neighbourhood, it will readily be guessed that music in church and chapel formed no insignificant item of public worship. Most certainly the

singers were not insignificant items in the various congregations! A former member of Mr. Barry's choir had communicated to him his sentiments on this subject, with candour worthy of a civiler speech: "Your congregation, sir, it would be nothing only for we; they come to hear we sing; howsoever," for he observed his pastor's depression, "we'll stand by you, sir, and not let it drop." But they did not stand by him for all that; for the very next week they disagreed among themselves, dissolved partnership, left the organ-loft, and their successors sang in their stead. Strange that harmony and discord should so often go hand in hand! It is said that everybody much connected with horses is apt to turn out badly; quite as frequently does an *official* connection with singing or ringing beget a troublesome pugnacious spirit in the previously most inoffensive. However, there never was a lack of volunteers to take the place of the departed, so that, as fast as one dynasty became defunct, another sprang into being.

When I visited L.R., the church could boast of a highly respectable and an uncommonly united band of singers—all from the working classes, and all self-taught, yet possessing no mean knowledge of the theory of music; far also from a mean idea of their own performance thereof. The organist for the time took my special fancy; there was something so genial and comical, and withal so intensely self-satisfied and good-humoured in his appearance. George Cooper by name, and an iron-worker by trade, it was astonishing how he was able to find time for the requisite weekly attendance in the organ-loft. He was not a little proud of his "kire," which he had formed entirely on his own plan; and truly they did their parts right heartily. Whatever in the service admitted of being sung or chanted, *was* sung or chanted: singing before it began, and singing after it was finished; anthems in the canonical places, sometimes even in those not strictly so, and chanting wherever it could be introduced. Their incumbent left them pretty much to themselves; and if it was ever intimated that things went too far, he replied, "They must take their course; they will find their level in time." This doctrine of everything "finding its level" was a great one with Mr. Barry; but for myself, I neither approved nor quite understood what it meant.

However, even to his complaisance there was a limit; and I never saw him more nearly angry than when, on one occasion, we stood up for the Psalms, and Mr. Barry, having his mouth open to begin, the singers took the words out of it, and started off on their own devices, at full gallop.

He let them finish, but the tone in which he gave out the chapter foretold an admonition in prospect. The next morning he sent for poor Mr. Cooper, who came, attended by one of his "kire," and charged him never to repeat that experiment; he told him that a great liberty had been taken, which, though he felt convinced it was not intended as such, could not be pardoned in future; and altogether acted the part of an injured but forgiving individual. Poor George looked crest-fallen and rueful, as he replied it was "all his kire's fault; they were so headstrong; when once they got the bit between

their teeth, there was no doing anything with them. They had been at him about chanting the Psalms, ever since afore Christmas, and so he thought at last they had better have their own way, and see what would come of it." Mr. Barry was sorry for the "kire," but said it was hardly fair to expect he could be at the mercy of all their whims and caprices; "and remember, George," he added, as he left the room, "I depend on you to see that such a thing never takes place again. I allow a great deal of licence in these matters, but I *must*, in future, know beforehand when any novelties are to be introduced."

The discomfited minstrel remained, when his pastor had departed, twisting his hat in an attitude of dejection; till at length Mrs. Barry endeavoured to raise his spirits by a well-timed compliment upon the success of a new chant—one for the "Venite," I think—which they had tried on the previous Sunday. Emboldened by this, he ventured to open his mind to her a little farther.

"You see, ma'am," he began, "I was a-coming in—me and this young gentleman—about a little business the kire asked me to take in hand for them; only our governor (meaning his clergyman) he don't seem quite the thing to-day; so perhaps he won't like to be asked."

"What is it, Cooper?" inquired Mrs. Barry: "I am sure Mr. Barry will object to nothing reasonable."

"Oh, for the matter of that, it's reasonable enough, ma'am," interposed the other "young gentleman," a sun-burnt youth of gigantic height and proportions. "The fact is, our tenor, Bob Hardcastle, he's a poor man, with a family, and is a steady slaving man into the bargain. Well, he's been so ill this three months, he can't hardly scrawl about the house, and so we thought, if so be the master don't object, we'd like to give him a night between us."

Mrs. Barry's face wore an expression of perplexity, as she replied, "How do you mean, 'give him a night?'"

"A singing night; get up a bit of a concert for him in the school-room here. There's a power of people as 'nd come to it, and there's two or three voices out of the choral society as say they'll help, and willing, for Hardcastle's much beliked here about. John Davis will chop down from N. with his flute, and we can get up a violin or two; so I think altogether it won't be a bad affair."

"And you want the boys' school-room, I suppose?"

"Yes, ma'am, if it's agreeable to you and the master; there ain't no convenient room for the musicianers."

Mrs. Barry promised to do her best for them; and as soon as the door had closed upon these sons of song, both Carry and I came down upon her about the "Choral Society," concerning which, on our making some remark interpreted as incredulous, if not disrespectful, Mrs. Barry assured us that "it was one which any parish might be proud of; and one which your sleepy little village has neither wit nor energy to get together. I believe there are upwards of 150 performers, violins and voices inclusive; and if you heard them come out in a chorus

occasionally, you would hide your diminished heads for ever."

We were overwhelmed with contrition and respect; but Carry inquired what all these "voices" did with themselves on Sundays, as we had no benefit from them in church.

"Well, that," said Mrs. Barry, "is rather a sore point. As a body, they do not patronize the Church; and, in fact, nearly the whole number belong to our dissenting brethren."

The poor "kire" had to be disappointed. It went to Mr. Barry's heart to say them nay; but a children's concert was in immediate prospect for the benefit of the school library, and this must not be interfered with. To make amends, he got up a private subscription for their invalid tenor, and invited them all to a *musical tea* at his house the following week, with full permission to sing thereat, to their ears' and hearts' content. Strict injunctions were laid upon us to make the evening as agreeable as possible; so Mrs. Barry and Carry were laying their heads together all the morning, devising schemes of amusement, looking out prints, old coins, etc.

They might have spared themselves the trouble. There was only one theme of interest—one all-engrossing topic! For the convenience of our company, tea was fixed at the hour of seven, when they arrived punctually all together. All looked serious, as befitted the occasion; all had a roll in the eye, which bespoke the presence of the Muse; all carried a music-book under their arms, which spoke of business. There were some interesting and striking faces among that group. The youth of gigantic proportions, who had stood by the organist in his hour of need, might have passed for a Norwegian giant, so sandy were his hair and beard, so blue his eye, so muscular his frame. His *vis-à-vis* at tea-time was in every respect his opposite: very short, very dark, very frail, with the sharpest little piercing eyes, which shot round upon you like little darts. He was the cleverest-looking of the lot; but I observed he was not popular among his comrades, and indeed I should have doubted him myself. Then there was the melancholy bard; he was about eighteen. Gloom was depicted upon his brow, which was a low one. There was sadness also in the colour of his waistcoat, and despair in the sit of his neck-cloth. When he gazed into his tea-cup, it was with a fitful and a troubled glance; and when he helped himself to beef-steak pie (for it was a meat, as well as a musical tea) it was with a reckless and abandoned air, as of one who would say, "I eat; but don't think I enjoy it, or existence, or anything." Our organist was there in bright array, and even poor Hardcastle had contrived to "scrawl" up for a few hours' pleasure after his dreary sojourn in the sick chamber. There were a dozen altogether, and the room soon became agreeably hot. But I should not omit to specify the "alto;" he was not otherwise remarkable only for his *teeth*, and they were indeed sufficient to identify him (which is meant for a pun, only it might not be appreciated!) They were like two rows of the choicest pearls; and as everybody who has good teeth has also a mouth arranged to

show them to the best advantage, his orifice extended almost from ear to ear.

There was a capital tea, with no end of meats and sweets. There is a little passage which came into my head as I saw them all falling to: "And, most dear actors, eat no onions nor garlick, for we are to utter sweet breath; and I do not doubt but to hear them say it is a sweet comedy." I wonder what the Black Country was like in the days of Shakespeare! Mrs. Barry and my sister presided over tea and coffee; Mr. Barry looked after the other creature comforts; and it was my office (always an easy one) to make myself generally entertaining and conversational. I had, to this end, rummaged up several old musical dictionaries belonging to the house, and had been hard at work over them during the day. I fear it must by this time be apparent to an enlightened world, that there are many subjects with respect to which my knowledge is not extensive. Music, unhappily, is one of these. Carry had once essayed to "learn me;" but she could make nothing of my fingers, and I could make nothing of her instructions, beyond two crotchets making a quaver, or two quavers a crotchet, I am sure I forget which; and something about a demisemiquaver, which always sounded mysterious. Considering this deficiency, however, I got on remarkably well, only once making a little blunder, over which I must be permitted to draw the veil. Our talk ran entirely upon Handel, and his merits as compared with those of other masters; glees, madrigals, chords, bars, sonnets, and solfeggios. For all the information our friends bestowed on me as to scientific technicalities, I volunteered some anecdotes connected with the subject of music and musical instruments. These gave universal satisfaction, and even the morbid young man was observed to look less as if he and life's enjoyments were for ever separated.

Tea was over about eight, and then we enjoyed ourselves till half-past ten. We *enjoyed* ourselves, but it was with the air of people who felt it was no light business they had in hand—that upon the present hour much depended. When once the music books were opened, and the pitch-pipe brought out, all besides vanished from our minds as well as from our sight. Then did the Norwegian giant dispute with him of the dark hair, as to the propriety of beginning something on G natural. Then did he of the white teeth perform a solo which exhibited those articles in dazzling distinctness. Then did he of the morbid vein resign himself to melody, and breathe away his sadness in strains that soothe the soul. He sang "Bonnie Annie Laurie," and it sounded like a dirge; when he affirmed that he would "lay him down and dee," Carry started and turned pale, for it sounded like truth, and he was looking unutterable things. We sang all sorts of music; nothing came amiss, sacred or secular, only that there was nothing that was not perfectly innocent and proper. I believe I may say, I never in my life saw such excitement manifested on any subject—such animated faces and gestures; never had I heard more ardent expressions and expostulations. There was no positive quarrelling, but we got near a breach

of the peace more than once, and Mrs. Barry had to step in and give a dexterous turn to the conversation.

Before they went away, Mr. Barry read prayers, and as they stood up to depart, the organist made a speech of acknowledgment. It embodied the grateful sentiments of himself and his brethren for the hospitality and gratification just experienced; made a touching allusion to the late "painful events" which had tended to draw down their clergyman's displeasure; professed the entire devotion of himself and band to the Church at large, and Mr. Barry at home; and ended by wishing us good night, in language which combined the tender, respectful, and essentially poetical, harmoniously united.

The children's concert was postponed after all. It came off at last on the evening before my departure from L. R. Albeit not an adorer of the juvenile race, I own that I enjoyed carrying away the remembrance of those childish voices as they sounded in chorus on that pleasant July evening. There were about sixty, boys and girls, all spick and span, all brushed and shining, most of them carrying posies. Where they came from, the bearers, I suppose, knew. It was a nice affair altogether, and nicely conducted. There was service in church, and a sermon to children at half-past three. After this, tea and buns were given to the children in one schoolroom, while another was prepared for the anxiously expected evening's entertainment.

The schoolmaster acted as conductor, and several of the "Choral Society" attended to assist over difficult places. I shall never forget the impression produced on me by one man who played the flute, the knowledge of which he had entirely acquired by himself. He was in bad health, and able to do little work, so he tried to earn what he could in the musical line; and it was evident that he looked upon his flute as a beloved and valued friend. The notes he produced were exquisite beyond description. He played some few solos, and sometimes accompaniments to the songs; in either case the effect was most delightful.

The children's performance was highly creditable. About eighteen of them were eminent vocalists, singing in parts, executing glees, etc. Some of the pieces were rather laughable and facetious, as "The Village Choristers," in which master and pupils are brought on the stage, and in which marching is introduced with great spirit. A little piece, which I think they called "Good Night," or something to that effect, came in well at the conclusion. When the children thank their audience, and bow or curtsy simultaneously, it took one by surprise, and was really quite affecting. But, in point of real beauty and pathos, nothing came up to the air, arranged for George Herbert's words, "Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright!" There were some nice faces among the children—"singing faces" I suppose they might be called, bright and sunny. But there was a slight air of sentimentality prevailing among the little girls, which rendered them on the whole less attractive than the boys.

POETICAL ZOOLOGY.

PART I.

OUR poetry enshrines many popular superstitions respecting members of the animal kingdom, which it would not be desirable to remove from its pages, even were it possible, for they supply illustrations of value and interest as to the mental condition of society in bygone times, and are chapters essential to a complete history of knowledge. It is curious to trace, when able to do so, such wild imaginations to their origin. While the inventive faculty has been largely at work in giving existence to them, it will be very commonly found that they are referable to simply coincident circumstances, upon which the idea of a real, intimate, and mysterious connection between them has been unceremoniously grafted. It has doubtless happened in many a sick-chamber, and immediately, too, before the dissolution of the patient, that the noise of the puny insect has been heard, vulgarly called the death-watch. Hence arose the fancy of premonition, which has so often disturbed the habitations of rural tranquillity, and from which they are not yet wholly free:—

"The solemn death-watch click'd the hour she died."

The noise is not owing to the voice of the insect, but to its beating on any hard substance with the shield or fore-part of the head. It is intended merely to summon a companion, and answers exactly to the call-note of a bird. From seven to eleven distinct strokes are usually given.

One of the oldest of these superstitions, going back to the times of Pliny and Aristotle, refers to the kingfisher, then termed the Halcyon; and to it we are indebted for the incorporation of the latter word in our language. This brilliant bird was supposed to possess the marvellous faculty of pacifying, or enchaining by its presence, wind and wave; and hence seasons of tranquillity are frequently styled halcyon days.

"When great Augustus made war's tempests cease,
His halcyon days brought forth the arts of peace."—*Denham*.

"Amidst our arms as quiet you shall be
As Halcyons brooding on a winter sea."—*Dryden*.

"Blow, but gently blow, faire winds,
From the forsaken shore,
And be as to the Halcyon kinde,
Till we are ferried o'er."—*Browne*.

"—All nature seemed
Fond of tranquillity; the glassy sea
Scarce rippled; the Halcyon slept upon the wave
The winds were all at rest."—*The Storm*.

The idea seems to have arisen from the well-known habits of the bird. It fishes wholly by sight, and can take only comparatively small prey. Hence all those circumstances require to be avoided which would interfere with distinct vision, in order to the success of its operations. It therefore frequents particular spots, and is out in certain states of the weather. Brawling and turbulent streams are avoided, in favour of those which are of languid flow; and these are not in a condition to tempt the bird to an excursion when wind ruffles, or rain dimples their surface. The days when the atmosphere is the most transparent and still, the waters most calm and clear, are precisely those which the kingfisher loves and in which he is most commonly seen, as favourable to a profitable look-out.

Our popular poetry also contains not a few errors with respect to the economy and habits of animals, for which, however, no blame can be attached to the writers, as they have merely adopted the prevailing but fallacious opinions of their time, gathered from the ordinary sources of such information. There are exceptions to the truth of this remark, two of which occur on the spur of the moment, and must be placed in the great group of literary inadvertencies. Lord Byron thus writes:—

"Even as an eagle overlooks his prey,
And for a moment, poised in middle air,
Suspends the motion of his mighty wings,
Then swoops with his unerring beak."

The king of birds invariably seizes his prey with the talons, carries it off to the nest, or some other place of security, and there at leisure uses the beak for tearing it up. Sir Walter Scott, remarkably enough for a keen sportsman, has misrepresented the natural history of the fieldfare in the following picture, referring to Scottish ground:—

"Within a dreary glen,
Where scattered lay the bones of men,
In some forgotten battle slain,
And bleached by drifting snow and rain;
The knot-grass fettered there the hand,
Which once could burst an iron band;
Beneath the broad and ample bone,
That bucklered heart to fear unknown,
A feeble and a timorous guest,
The field fare, framed her lowly nest."

The bird is a migratory thrush, and one of our winter visitors. But it does not breed in this country, nor build on the ground in its native quarters. The nest is lodged in the firs and larches of Norway, at the height of from ten to forty feet.

But sometimes the poets have been right and the naturalists wrong. It was formerly believed that insects had not the sense of hearing—a notion countenanced by Linnaeus and Bonnet. A different and more correct opinion Shakespeare expresses in the words:—

"I will tell it softly;
You crickets shall not hear me."

The observations of Brunelli, an Italian naturalist, are quite conclusive upon the point. He kept several field-crickets in a chamber, which continued their crinkling song through the whole day; but the moment they heard a knock at the door they were silent. He subsequently invented a method of imitating their sounds; and when he did so outside the door, at first a few would venture on a soft whisper, and by and by the whole party burst out in a chorus to answer him; but upon repeating the rap at the door, they instantly stopped again, as if alarmed. He likewise confined a male in one side of his garden, while he put a female in the other at liberty, which began to leap as soon as she heard the crink of the male, and immediately came to him—an experiment which he frequently repeated with the same result.

It would be marrying some of the finest strains of poetry so to change them as to correct the false zoology. But, quite apart from this consideration, it would not be proper to touch the erroneous passages, because faithful representations of the ideas current in the times when they were written. The case is altogether different and wholly unjustifiable, when a writer of the present day adopts an old mistake of natural history, and gives circulation to it as an undoubted fact in his pages, for he then wilfully makes them the medium of conveying a false impression. No fault can be found with the dramatist for the misconception, as it was the belief of his age:—

"I will play the swan,
And die in music."
"He makes a swan-like end,
Fading in music."

But exception may be fairly taken to the following recent iteration as a sober truth, of a completely unfounded fancy:—

"What is that, mother?
"The swan, my love.

He is floating down from his native grove,
No loved one now, no nestling nigh;
He is floating down by himself to die;
Death darkens his eyes and unplumes his wings,
Yet the sweetest song is the last he sings.
Live so, my love, that when death shall come,
Swan-like and sweet, it may waft thee home."—Doane.

Most animals on the approach of death retire from the companionship of their kind to die in solitude. This the swan may do; but certainly there is no musical accompaniment in the case, for the bird is utterly incapable of it. The domesticated, or mute swan, as it is called, though not absolutely voiceless, has no note, living or dying, but a hiss; and the tone of the wild or whistling swan is sufficiently harsh and dissonant. Here, by the way, it may be stated that there is no foundation for the common representation of the nightingale's song as of the mournful cast:—

"Here can I sit alone, unseen of any,
And to the nightingale's complaining notes
Tune my distresses, and record my woes."—Shakespeare.
"Sweet bird, that shunn'st the noise of folly,
Most musical, most melancholy."—Milton.

If the notes seem plaintive, it is owing to the listener's pensive mood, promoted by the seclusion in which they are ordinarily heard, with the night's sombre shadows. The song is the outpouring of joy, not the vehicle of sadness; and it is due mainly to the male bird, who thus cheers his companion in the discharge of her maternal duties.

As poetry is early and extensively read, it is not a superfluous task, while one of some interest, to point out a few instances of its discordance with the advanced knowledge of the age. In the "Midsummer Night's Dream," the fairies are said to light their tapers

"At the fiery glow-worm's eyes."

But it is now known that the luminosity proceeds from the tail of the insect, not from the head. Thomson has the passage:—

"Along the crooked lane, on every hedge,
The glow-worm lights his gem, and through the dark
A moving radiance twinkles."

The truth is, that the male glow-worm is smaller than the female, and but rarely seen, nor is it certainly determined whether it is luminous at all or not. It is the female that is so conspicuous, and so often observed. Of another insect, Thomson says:—

"Light fly his slumbers, if perchance a flight
Of angry gadflies fasten on the herd,
That, startling, scatters from the shallow brook
In search of lavish stream; tossing the foam,
They scorn the keeper's voice, and scour the plains,
Through all the bright severity of noon."

The description of the distress of the cattle is true enough; but their tormentor is solitary, not social, in its habits. The fly appears singly, not in a flight or swarm; and it is not anger, but instinct, that leads the creature to trouble the herd.

On October mornings, fine gossamer threads are seen overlying the grass, the hedges, and sometimes hanging high in air, to which Quarles thus refers:—

“And now autumnal dews were seen
To cobweb every green.”

It was the old idea that gossamer, the web of the field-spider, was formed of dew evaporated by the sun's heat into threads.

In Milton, we have the working bee represented as the female:—

“Swarming next,
The female bee, that feeds her husband drone,
Deliciously, and builds her waxen cells
With honey stored.”

The working bees which form the mass of the population are mules or neuters; the drones are the males; and of the queens, or females, there is usually but one in a hive.

Southey, in the “Curse of Kehama,” mentions

“The footless fowl of heaven, that never
Rest upon the earth, but on the wing for ever,
Hovering o'er flowers, their fragrance food inhale,
Drink the descending dew upon its way,
And sleep aloft while floating on the gale.”

This is a reference to the gorgeous birds of paradise, which are limited to the little-known regions of New Guinea, and the adjoining Papuan archipelago, periodically migrating to the Moluccas when the spice plants are in bloom. In preparing and drying the skins, the natives were in the habit of removing the feet. In this state they were sold to the Malays, conveyed to India, and thence to Europe. Hence arose the idea that the birds had really no feet, and consequently never rested on the ground, but perpetually floated in the air. Linnaeus styled one of the best-known species “footless,” *Paradisæa apoda*.

NEEDLEWORK IN GERMANY.

Those of our readers who were interested by a recent paper (No. 454), entitled “Four Generations of Samplers; or, How our Grandmothers spent their Time,” will be gratified in reading the following notes from a correspondent, on the Needle and its work in Germany in our own times.

With the German ladies, knitting, netting, and crochet reign triumphant, such innovations as “broderie à la minute” and “point de poste” being only known to the very young. Curtains are knitted and netted, crochet covers are put on the tables to save the ordinary ones, of which one only gets a glimpse at the corners; the same as regards chairs and sofas. This monotonous work goes on unceasingly, and, we are sorry to say, on Sundays as well as week days, in many parts of Germany. In this work almost all German housewives are alike: there is no repose for them; they realize to the letter the saying, that “women's work is never done.” The battle of the needle goes on without any respite, with (in case of renewed speed) a sort of bagpipe movement of the right elbow, most

curious to watch. In the north they knit with the left hand.

The domestic needle-workers meet at four or five o'clock for coffee, the elders in one room and the younger ones in another; or, if only one room is used, they remain entirely apart. From these enlivening réunions gentlemen are generally excluded; and if they had ever been acquainted with the delights of them, we question whether they would feel tempted to renew the trial.

Few complicated patterns are attempted at these parties, as the mysteries of “two in one” and “purl” would interfere with the conversation. A noble countess, or Mrs. Doctor This or Mrs. Rector That does not think it the least beneath her dignity to knit little queer-looking pieces, which, when finished, disappear in the pocket of her dress. If some ignorant being asks what they are intended for, the answer is “a counterpane;” and the gratuitous information is perhaps given that, if the lady is very “industrious,” she can make one in four days!

Stockings are, however, the most in favour, as they can be continued during the most animated conversations. Some are so choice in their manner of making them, that they work gold beads in for their initials; and many boast of having more than fifty pairs lying by in their drawers. In the meanwhile, they buy all their cuffs and collars—a rather false economy, when stockings can be had in Saxony quite equal to ours, and nearly as cheap; although, before our Exhibition in 1851, they were almost unattainable.

The young ladies are beginning to abandon these industrious habits. Knitting schools will soon be among the things that were, and collars and sleeves are rapidly appearing at sociable parties, although the old people shake their heads, and think the present generation “too Frenchified.”

It seems droll to a stranger to see a dashing-looking officer sitting before a table, in a public garden, sipping his coffee, while his wife sits by his side knitting stockings, sometimes for him, sometimes for herself; but, spite of all their practice, they never seem to attain the dexterity of the Scotch and Welsh peasants. One can't help grieving, too, at the thought, that all the money thus economized by the lady will be unpitifully whiffed away by the head of the family in tobacco smoke.

In one thing we certainly think that the German ladies show good taste, and that is, in their general undisguised admiration of all that is English. This fact would not strike any one so much who goes there direct from England, for we have all a tolerably good opinion of ourselves, feeling that we belong to “the first nation in the world;” but after a long residence in France, and constantly hearing ourselves classed with other nations as “poor benighted beings,” at least thirty years behind the French in civilization, it is very agreeable to feel on the top step of the ladder again. Few can have lived even a short time among the Germans without bringing away a grateful recollection of their kindly, disinterested hospitality, and often wishing to see their beautiful country and their friendly faces again.